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SUNDAY READING.

HINTS TO ALL RANKS OF PEOPLE,

ON THE
OCCASION OF THE SCARCITY OF 1795:

Being taken from the Story of our Savior's miraculously
feeding Five Thousand Persons with Five Barley
Loaves and Two small Fishes.



"Gather up the Fragments that remain, that nothing be lost."

SOLD BY J. EVANS AND CO.

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HINTS, &c. &c.

IT cannot be unseasonable to devote the present Sunday Reading * to the consideration of the story of our Savior's miraculously feeding five thousand persons with five barley loaves and two small fishes, as it is related in the sixth chapter of St. John.

Jesus having been engaged (as we read in the former chapter) both in healing the sick, and in teaching the people, *after these things went over the sea of Galilee. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw the miracles which he did on them that were diseased.* The multitude in those days were much like the multitude now; they did not follow Christ on account of the good instruction they got from him, or the excellence they saw in his character, but *because they saw the miracles which he did on them that were diseased.* Their astonishment was excited, and their natural feelings also were called forth by these acts of mercy; and it was the manner of our Savior, when he had thus gained their attention, to turn his beneficence to their bodies to the benefit of their souls, by preaching to the crowds whom his miracles had collected. Let it therefore be here remarked by the way, that the best mode of shewing charity to the poor is that of which our Savior has set the example; I mean the uniting charitable help and religious instruction both together, for many a one may take from the same hand which has given him bread, a bible, or some religious book which may prove a far greater benefit than all the money which he may have re-

* This Tract was first published in August, 1795, on the scarcity which then prevailed.

ceived: hospitals to which chapels are annexed, are to be praised on account of their uniting these two principles: the sick man goes thither indeed seeking only to be cured of his bodily disorder, just like the sick people who applied to Christ: yet by attending the chapel he may also obtain, like some of them, an everlasting benefit to his soul. Such hospitals ought to be very liberally subscribed to by Christians, for it is plain they are founded in the true spirit of Christianity.

But to proceed with our present story: *When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, whence shall we buy bread that these may eat? And this he said to prove him, for he himself knew what he would do.* Philip had seen Christ heal the sick, and do numberless miracles; this question is therefore put to him with the view of proving whether he had thereby learnt to believe fully in Christ and whether he thought that the same Jesus, who had restored the sick could feed the hungry also. It often pleases God to prove us, in order in like manner to exercise our faith. Our national trials ought to be considered as sent to us principally for this end. We have not indeed, like Philip, beheld any actual miracles in these days, and yet methinks we have already witnessed many wonderful interferences of Providence in behalf of our nation. In the year 1780, when London seemed likely to be destroyed through the riots which prevailed, it pleased God to stop that tremendous evil, and to lengthen out the prosperity of this nation. Not long since our King was restored to us, almost by a miracle. Many dangers of invasion or insurrection which lately were supposed to threaten us,

have also been checked or turned away. We ought therefore to acknowledge the good hand of Providence, in time past, and to trust the same power in the time to come; for surely He who has done already so many great things for us, is able by one means or other, to multiply bread to us also. We ought all indeed to consider the present scarcity as a call to repentance, and a punishment of our manifold sins; and yet if, like Philip, we are true Disciples, we may look upon it also as a trial of our faith, and as an event that is sent to prove us, by which it may even please God, in one way or other, to do us good, for *he himself already knows what he will do.*—*Philip answered him, Two hundred penny-worth of bread is not sufficient that every one may take a little.* A penny in those days was equal to about eight-pence of our money, and was the common day's wages of a laboring man; money being indeed much more valuable then than it is now. Two hundred pence was therefore equal to about seven of our pounds sterling; which was a far greater sum than Christ and all his Apostles could have raised among them, as appears from Philip's mode of speaking of it. Since therefore all the money which could be got together from the whole party of Disciples would not be sufficient to buy so much *that every one of the multitude might take a little.* The case appeared desperate to Philip, who does not seem at this moment to have been sufficiently aware of the wonderful power of Christ. *One of his Disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, there is a lad here which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes, but what are they among so many?* And Jesus said, *Make the men sit down.* Now there was much grass in the place. So the men

sat down, in number about five thousand. Whatsoever straits we may be in, our duty is always to do as we are bid in the Scriptures, and then to leave the event to Almighty power and wisdom. At Christ's command the men sat down, though they did not at all see how they could be fed. Just so let us be anxious only to know what it becomes us to do in our present circumstances, casting all our cares on Him who is able to provide for us. — *And Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks he distributed to his Disciples.* What! did he give thanks also? and for this little pittance? Let it be further remarked, that these thanks were given for *barley* loaves, to which were added indeed a few of the smallest fishes, which are generally of the worst and most common sort. Ah! how many rich persons are there who, in this irreligious age, have left off this christian custom of giving thanks, even before they sit down to the most abundant meals! And I must say equally to the poor, how many of you are there who neglect grace before your meat, and how many of you are there likewise, who, if the same barley bread was presented to you which was offered to the Savior of the world, instead of giving thanks as he did, would be ready rather to complain; not chusing, even in a time of scarcity, to eat any bread that is not wheaten! So little do many both of the rich and poor deserve that christian name to which all nevertheless lay claim, and so little do any of us possess of that patient and humble, and thankful spirit, which distinguished Christ and his Apostles. — We read that Jesus then proceeded to *distribute the loaves to the Disciples, and the Disciples to them that were sat down, and likewise of the fishes as much as they would; and it*

appears that as the Disciples gave out the bread, our Savior, by a very extraordinary miracle, caused it continually to increase as it passed through their hands, so that the whole multitude was sufficiently fed by it.—What an astonishing miracle was this! Here were five thousand people, many of them helpless women and children, who sat down hungry and faint, without any prospect of getting nourishment; and who rose up having been fed they knew not how, so as to be restored to their strength and to have their hunger fully satisfied.—But what are we to learn by this miracle? Why is it recorded, as in fact it is, in all the four Evangelists? We may learn from it in the first place the greatness of the power of Christ. It is another proof added to all that went before, of his being indeed the Son of God. He wrought all manner of miracles, *the blind received their sight, the lame walked, the lepers were cleansed at his command, and even the winds and the seas obeyed Him.* He cast out devils by his word, *the very angels of God also are said to worship him.* By Him indeed God made the world. No wonder then that the whole kingdom of nature is subject to him: the kingdom of providence is placed in his hands also, and it is He who is made head of the kingdom of grace; for *the government is on his shoulders: all power is given him both in heaven and earth.* It is in him to save, and it is in him to destroy. But we may learn from this miracle in the next place, in what manner it is that Christ is wont to exercise his power. It is said in another part of Scripture, that *when Christ saw the multitudes who followed him he had compassion on them, and that he would not send them home fasting lest they should faint by the way, for divers of them came from far.*

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What exceedingly great mercy do we discover in the character of our Savior! the more we examine it in every part the more compassion do we find: He not only regarded the souls of men, but he felt (as we all ought to do) for their bodies also, and his tender mind therefore led him peculiarly to concern himself for that part of his hearers who had walked a long way, lest they should be weary before they got home, and thus suffer in any respect by their having gone after Christ. Here then is a hint given us, that no man need be afraid of any real mischief or inconvenience happening to him, by his becoming a follower of Christ*. It is not

* The reader is desired to be careful of not misunderstanding this part of the story. In this instance a great prophet, who was also the long expected Savior, had appeared in the world, and he went about working miracles, as well as instructing the people: it therefore became the duty of men for a time, even to quit their work, that they might do honor to this Divine Teacher, as well as view his miracles and receive the truth from his lips: consequently this multitude being in the way of duty, were so far from being allowed to starve while following Christ, that a miracle was wrought in their behalf. No miracles however will now be wrought for those, who merely on some religious pretence break off their proper and necessary work, thus exposing both themselves and their families to suffer want. And yet let us take care that this caution be rightly and fairly understood also. We are blaming those who under the mere pretext of attendance on religious worship, indulge either their curiosity to hear some favorite preacher, or else their sloth, and not those who being industrious in their ordinary matters, and having sufficient time for it, are more frequent than their worldly neighbors in every religious exercise. The true state of the case now seems to be this; worship is a necessary part of religion, attendance to the duties of our station is another necessary part. To attend to both of these in their several seasons and according to our opportunity, and to exercise a christian principle in both, is what is here intended by the term *following Christ*.

impossible that some of the worldly friends or connections of these multitudes, would charge them with indiscretion and folly for venturing so far from home in company with this extraordinary person, and might even laugh at them and say, that they minded Christ more than their necessary food. The event however proved that all such worldly scoffers and reasoners were mistaken; for Christ took it upon himself to provide for the whole multitude that came after him.

A case not unlike this often happens now. When a man begins to be very conscientious, strict, and truly religious, resolving henceforth to follow Christ, his worldly friends are apt to think him rash and imprudent in not keeping so closely to his worldly interest as he did before: they see him begin to sacrifice or hazard many a thing for Christ's sake, just as this croud hazarded their dinner, and these unbelieving people therefore are ready to rebuke the religious man and say, "Why will you venture so much for religion? Why don't you mind the main chance? Why are you such a fool as to scruple taking a little unjust gain? and why will you make yourself so unpopular and disagreeable by your singularity and strictness? or why will you risk the displeasure of some worldly friend or protector, who might be of use to you or your family if you would follow him instead of following Christ and your religion. You will ruin yourself at this rate; you will not have bread to eat; you will certainly be starved." But the religious man may answer as this multitude might have answered, "I am determined to leave all for Christ, and I know that he is both able and willing to provide for me: I will follow wherever religion leads, though it should

chance to lead me ever so far from my past connections, or habits, and manner of life, for I will trust in God, who will not suffer me to sink while I am engaged in his service." In truth the losses and inconveniencies which threaten a man on his becoming religious, are in general apparent only and not real: they are often a mere phantom which vanishes when he makes the experiment of being really religious; or rather they are a temptation by which it pleases God to try his sincerity, for it is a maxim in the school of Christ that "he that saveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life (that is, he who is willing to give up all that is dear to him) shall save it, he shall have manifold more in the present world, and in the world to come life everlasting;" he shall be as secure, in short, while he is following Christ as this multitude was, however their unbelieving friends might tremble for them.

You then, who in this time of scarcity are poor and distressed, and are trembling for your daily bread, learn if you are the faithful followers of Jesus to put your whole trust and confidence in him. Cannot he who chose to work a miracle for this multitude, rather than let the feeblest of them faint in their bodies, on account of their having left home for his sake, provide bread for his followers in this age also? This is one of the great lessons taught us by this story. We all profess to trust Christ with our souls. This story is to teach us to trust him with our bodies also, and to put away that anxious care which poor people especially are apt to feel concerning the morrow. If thou art serving God in the way of a diligent and honest calling and hast an everlasting hope in Christ, fear not as to thy worldly matters. A truly religious man indeed who has his heart in

heaven will not be anxious, as the men of this world are, to have any great portion in this life: like the Apostle Paul, "having food and raiment therewith he will be content." People suffer in general from their vanity or false shame, or at the worst from their dread of future want, much more than from their actual want: he whose thoughts are raised above earthly things, and who puts his cheerful trust in God has therefore a wonderful advantage over irreligious men when there comes a season of distress. If times are hard he strives it is true to be more diligent in his calling, but having thus done his duty, he trusts to him who provideth the young ravens with food, and clothes the lilies of the field, and whose providence orders all things for him, and in this sense therefore "he takes no thought for the morrow, leaving the morrow to take thought for the things of itself, for sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

But having spoken thus strongly of the duty of trusting in God in our temporal matters, which cannot be carried too far while we neglect no part of that diligence which belongs to us, let me now remark a further circumstance which is mentioned towards the end of this story. We read that *when the multitude were filled, Christ said to his Disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain that nothing be lost.*—What a striking lesson of œconomy does our Savior give us by this precept. "Gather up (said he) the fragments that remain," that is, the crumbs and broken pieces which the multitude have left.—Now if Christ had said this to some of us, I fear we should have been in danger of replying to him in some such manner as the following: "But why need we trouble ourselves about these few crumbs?"

Why should we mind such trifles? * Religion does not consist in descending to such matters as these; and what a mean thing will it seem to go about gathering the scraps which are scattered all over the mountain, for as to the fish there can be very little of that left; there can only be a little barley bread remaining, which we may as well leave for the next poor person that passes, or for the fowls of the air to feast upon. And moreover, it is unnecessary to go after it now for the people have done their dinner, they are not calling for any more bread, *for all are filled.*" Thus, in short, some of us would have objected that it was too troublesome to gather up the crumbs; some that it was too mean, and others, no doubt, that since there were no common beggars just then at hand, there would be nobody to eat them when they were gathered.

Our Savior however judged otherwise, and I think it can hardly be doubted that both he and his Apostles lived for many days after, *on the twelve baskets of the fragments of the five barley loaves which are said to have remained over and above to them that had eaten.* That so much as twelve baskets should be filled with them, was undoubtedly a part of the same miracle which has been already spoken of: methinks,

* We hope it may not be improper here to censure the custom of giving away good meat to favorite cats and dogs, or good bread to poultry, which is a sort of waste always wrong and unseemly, but peculiarly so at the present period; this is often done for the sake of the momentary pleasure which the master feels in seeing the animal eat, rather than for the good of the animal, which like the fowls of the air spoken of above, might thrive equally upon inferior food. Customs of this sort, however trifling they may seem, imply a principle of waste, and afford perhaps an example of profusion to servants, which is not inconsiderable in its effects.

however, it may be here observed that if after some of our modern feasts, all the fragments that remain were to be gathered up and set before us, the quantity in like manner would exceed all imagination, insomuch that it might seem perhaps like another miracle.

But if all idle and luxurious waste is forbid thus generally by our Savior, how much more criminal must it be in the present season. Let us all then consider well this lesson, and let all ranks among us, rich and poor, masters and servants, vie with each other in trying to relieve the present scarcity, each of us also condescending to gather up the fragments that remain that nothing be lost; a bad season may thus be made a lasting benefit to us, by putting us upon new habits of temperance and œconomy, and this visitation of which we have been so much afraid may be turned into a blessing to the whole land. — *Then those men when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.* The miracle struck the whole multitude, and as they were all at that time expecting the appearance of a great prophet, they concluded that this must be the person. Happy would it be if we, whenever Providence either afflicts or delivers us, would in like manner acknowledge the Divine hand, and would say under all his various dealings towards us, as we have equal reason to do, "this is of a truth the dispensation of that God who ruleth over the world."

Though we have now gone through the story, I cannot take leave of my readers without addressing a few farther observations to each of three several classes of people. I mean to the rich, to those in moderate circumstances, and to the very poor.

To the first, let me say something still more strongly than I have yet done in praise of moderation. Behold then the Son of Man, the Savior of the world, making a royal feast. Five thousand persons are his guests; but the turf is his table, Himself and his Disciples are the waiting servants; the drink no doubt is water from the nearest spring, and the food is barley bread and a few small fishes; and when the dinner is over, the Disciples are commanded by the Governor of the feast, to "gather up the fragments which remain that nothing be lost." Ye great and gay who roll in affluence, and who think to exalt yourselves by your pomp, and luxury, and profusion, come then and contemplate this story. How does it put to shame your shining cupboards and splendid feasts! How forcibly does this example preach to you the dignity of moderation! I mean not indeed to censure that hospitality which is only suited to men's rank, or to blame any other expence that is requisite to persons in higher circumstances, though I will make this remark, that most people are apt to over-rate their own rank, and that true christian simplicity consists not in falling short merely of those few persons who are notorious, and perhaps even ridiculous for their pomp and extravagance, but that it consists in condescending even to keep a little below the common level of people in our condition.

But Christianity requires further, that every one should be economical on principle. Many of the great are willing, in this season of danger and scarcity, to make no small retrenchment in the articles of their table, but they are doing it perhaps as an occasional and partial thing. Now the very custom of the times may plead for this temporary kind of

economy, and some of the most ostentatious and profuse men in the land, may, possibly, for a week or two, by way either of policy, or variety, or fashion, or whim, become as careful in gathering up the fragments of bread at their tables, as the very Disciples of Christ. But if they would be Christians, let them imitate the whole character of Christ. We read in holy writ, that there was a time (the period seems indeed to have been a very short one) when it was the fashion for great crouds of people, of all ranks and degrees, to go after John the Baptist, in the wilderness, *for all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and all the people of Jordan, went forth to be baptized, confessing their sins.* Even the rulers and chief priests were seen in company with the multitude attending on the poor prophet; and all the Pharisees, with their long robes, were gathered around the man whose raiment was camel's hair, and who had a leathern girdle about his loins, and whose meat was locusts and wild boney, for repentance was the fashion at that season, just as fasting is all the rage at present. But when John saw the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to be baptized of him, he only rebuked them so much the more sharply. Just so, methinks, would he rebuke some of these inconsistent persons of the present day (for such I fear there may be) who while in affected tenderness to the poor, they are saving a few bits of bread with the one hand, are throwing away hundreds of pounds with the other, on their vices, dissipation, and luxury. *What hath warned you to fast from the tenth to the end? What pretence can you make either to self-denial, or benevolence, or religion? Bring forth therefore, fruits meet for repentance; and in their sin, all respects, consistently*

with this self-denying character you have assumed. Renounce your pride, give no food to your vanity, and dismiss your luxuries altogether. Provide yourselves with a regular fund for your future charity, by the reduction in your whole establishment, which you may now make. Confess also your sins. Let prayer be added to your fasting. Repent, in short, of the whole of your past life, and betake yourselves to the mercies of your Savior.

But let us direct our rebuke in the next place to some individuals in a lower class of society. Many there are of the middling rank of people, who, having set out in life too expensively, are now so burthened, through the late increase in the charges of living, that there are almost as great objects of pity among this class as among the lowest. These men have laid the foundation of their present difficulties and temptations (for difficulties like theirs are sure to be attended with temptations) by setting out on a false principle, I mean particularly the principle of rivaling and imitating others. To do as others do, and to spend what others spend is the wretched rule by which they have proceeded, a rule which it is one of the first principles of a Christian to renounce. *Be not conformed to this world.—Love not the world, nor the things of the world.—If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.*—These are precepts which such persons, perhaps, may now see to be not only not harsh, as they may once have thought, but friendly even to their worldly interests, and altogether kind and charitable. Ah! let them now quit that example of the men of the world, which has entangled them, and let them learn both worldly and heavenly wisdom, by copying after the pattern

of Christ. Then also they may hope, through the new fund which their moderation will supply, to imitate the beneficence of their Savior, by becoming his instruments in multiplying bread to the hungry, instead of shrinking, as all such persons are now seen to do, at the very name of a subscription for the poor.

But there are others of nearly the same rank, who, though rather more successful in the world, are almost as little disposed to any acts of charity, for as yet they wait till they have got together for themselves, in the first place, an ample and solid fund. By-and-by they hope to be rich, and then their charity will begin. To such I wish to remark, that if you say you must be rich before you begin to be charitable, you never will begin. Let such be reminded of the story we have been relating, and take a lesson from it. What if the twelve Disciples had said, that before they could part with any portion of the five barley loaves which Christ put into their hands, they must claim a right to feed themselves up to the full? Would they not have shewn a sad want of faith in Christ? Would they not have been very unfaithful stewards of the bread intrusted to them? And thou art an unfaithful steward of God's manifold gifts, if thou dealest not thy bread to the hungry, and if, especially in a time of need like this, thou delayest, under any pretext, to shew mercy to the poor. Thou art as much a steward as ever these Apostles were. We are all stewards: all we have of every kind, is committed to us as such: the Apostles, no doubt, took to themselves a part of the food committed to them; but what was not needful to them they readily dispersed; and the bread increased in their hands, through the Divine Blessing.

upon it. God, in like manner, permits thee to apply to thine own use such part of the good things which his Providence has sent, as may be truly heedful for thee, and in dispensing a part to others, he shall continually increase thy store. It is true miracles have ceased, but it may be here remarked, that the very manner in which our Savior's miracles were wrought was often such as serves to instruct us, in respect to God's more ordinary dispensations in the world; thus to instance in the present case, our Savior made use of the Apostles as his instruments in feeding the multitude; and it was in passing through their hands that the bread increased in a manner unperceived. Just thus God uses man in these days, as his instrument in supplying the wants of his fellow-creatures, and just thus also it often pleases him to enlarge more and more the liberal man's income, as it is passing in acts of charity out of his hands: for how easy is it for the Almighty to do this without any appearance of miracle, merely by the ordinary course of his Providence, and to disappoint, in like manner, the covetous person of his gain, as a just judgment upon him. God can send losses in trade, a heavy debt, or a secret unaccountable blast on a man's character, or he can visit the covetous yet successful shop-keeper, with some lingering sickness, which he shall cause to run through the family, and devour more than all the profits of the shop. Let the trader who believes in Providence, take advantage therefore of these hints, and let him recollect also that there is a saying of the wise man, which is still on record for our admonition. "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and yet it tendeth to poverty."

But now, lastly, I address myself to the poor, and to you what can I say more encouraging or comforting than that our Lord himself was poor, and that though poor he was patient and content. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man had not where to lay his head." We call to you, therefore, as well as to the rich, to come and contemplate this story. Behold your Savior with uplifted hands, and with thankful and peaceful looks, giving praise to God for this meal of water and barley bread, and when it is over, commanding his Disciples to gather up the fragments that remain that nothing be lost. Can you sit down to a piece of barley bread with equal cheerfulness, and can you with equal gratitude give thanks? You think, perhaps, that your lot is hard, and that you are worthy a better fare; but was not your Savior also worthy? Surely he, of whom John the Baptist said, "the latchet of his shoes I am not worthy to unloose," had a better title than any which you can plead to a good share in the things of this life.

But you are hurt possibly through you having heard or seen much of the luxury of the rich around you, and you have thus learnt to condemn them altogether as a body of most unchristian and wicked people. Now it is remarkable that when our Savior was on earth, he many times entered into the houses of the rich, where he must have witnessed their superior enjoyments. Yet we find no instance of his carping at what he saw, or of his singling them out as the only wicked rank and order of people. I fear there are some poor men who think that reproofs to the rich are very much wanted, and who perhaps in reading the present tract, may have received peculiar pleasure, from those passages which

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bear the hardest on some of their superiors, and who nevertheless, though they affect to like plain dealing, will perhaps be more offended than even the rich themselves, if any remarks however just and true should now be made to their prejudice. But as we have not scrupled to speak freely to the rich, so neither shall we fear to deal plainly with you. You then are a poor man, as I will suppose, that is fretful and discontented with your lot, you are always talking against the rich and great, your whole thought is engaged not about your own faults but about their pomp, and luxury, and sin. But let me ask then, are there no sinners among the poor? When God sends his visitations on the land, do you think it is for the sins of our governors and our rich men only, or for the common iniquities of us all? As this is an important, and in some degree a disputed question, let me carry the reader to the book of unerring truth for a little sound knowledge on this general subject. We find in the sacred Scriptures that in the time of Christ, there were men of all ranks and conditions living in the world much as there are now: mention is occasionally made of *kings, and governors, and chief priests, of possessors of lands and houses, of sellers of silver and of purple, of chief captains also and centurions, as well as of soldiers, and sailors, and fishermen, and multitudes of common people.* Now it may a little help our judgment in the present question, to inquire who were the wicked people of those days. Does our bible tell us that the poorer class was pure and virtuous, and always in the right, and only a few rich men wicked and in the wrong? We read indeed of a *Herod arrayed in royal robes*, who on account of his pride was *eaten of worms and gave up the ghost*, but we are informed

also that a great body of the people were sharers in his sin, having even excited him to it, for Herod's chief guilt consisted in not rejecting the glory given him by the multitude, when they impiously cried out *that his voice was the voice of a God, and not the voice of a man.* Again we read of *Demetrius* a great silversmith, who because he made shrines for *Diana*, most wickedly stopt the mouth of Paul because he preached the true God; but it happened in this case also, that all the common workmen who got their bread by the same craft, partook largely in the guilt; and many people who gathered round them also, for (behold here an instance of the violence and folly of a mob) *they all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.* We will mention only one other proof, how dreadfully both rich and poor have shewn themselves liable to commit the same crimes; I allude here to no less a crime than the crucifixion of our Savior. The Pharisees I grant were some of the foremost in opposing Christ; the chief priests were they who took counsel how they might put him to death; a false Apostle betrayed him; Pontius Pilate, a time serving judge, delivered him up: but let it be remembered at the same time that it was the multitude that cried *Crucify him, Crucify him.*

These observations are by no means made with the view of loading the inferior ranks of people with peculiar blame, or of favoring the general character of the higher, but merely for the sake of contradicting that false sentiment, which ignorant or designing men who choose to flatter the poor have often put abroad, namely, that the poor are always the virtuous, and the rich, the wicked part of a community; a sentiment which all history sacred as well as pro-

fane flatly contradicts, and which our own observation of the present times, if we are not strangely blinded by prejudice, must contradict also: the truth is (and it is the love of the truth which makes us speak it) we are all naturally very corrupt and prone to yield to our several temptations: the rich are more particularly in danger of being proud and luxurious, and regardless of the happiness of their inferiors, while the poor are in equal danger of not properly respecting those whom God has placed above them, and of becoming tumultuous and unreasonable, as well as irreligious, and immoral, and rash, and impatient, and complaining. In the sight of our common father we are all of us methinks like so many criminals, who differ more in the kind than we do in the degree of our guilt, and instead therefore of quarrelling with each other about the proper division of the sin that is due to the several classes of society, it would be better for us all to humble ourselves in this day of our visitation, and to confess with one voice that we are unworthy even of the most common favors of God's Providence, and as holy Jacob observed that *we are less than the least of all his mercies*. But as I am speaking now to the poor let me more particularly observe, that if every poor man instead of venturing *beyond his depth* (for I wish to measure my words) into the vast history of kingdoms and empires, and of the great affairs of state, would retire home and look a little into the more plain and simple history of his own past life, and if he would try to trace the evils which have befallen him up to their proper source, with as much care as some men bestow on tracing the evils which have come upon the kingdom, he would perhaps find that more of the hardships he now suffers are

owing to his own fault than he would imagine without such examination. Either want of industry when he was young, or want of oeconomy when was a little older, and might easily have laid up money; want of temperance, chastity, and sobriety, or want of character for strict truth and exact integrity; want of prudence in some of the important steps of life, and above all, want of religion, which is the root indeed of the other sins, I have named, whereby also the blessing of God has been withdrawn from him — these are the causes which bring a poor man into straits, and which lead to rags and all manner of wretchedness, which make it difficult also to recover; so that it seems both easier and pleasanter to plunder a mill or even to pull down a kingdom, than to rise by the slow means of patient industry, trusting in God and exercising the grace of repentance. Here therefore let me warn the more industrious poor to beware of joining themselves with such characters, beware even of the first tendency of such a spirit, beware of lending the smallest countenance to their proceedings. Paul who became afterwards a fierce persecutor of the Christians, began by merely *keeping the raiment* of those who cast the stones at Stephen. You who aid and comfort men of riotous dispositions, or who do but seem to comfort them by standing among them, may by mixing in such company both promote their ends and learn their spirit, and though your crime be not equal to that of Paul, yet remember that the power of government is a power *ordained of God, and that he that resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves condemnation.*

But now finally, let me advise you as the best way of softening the evils of poverty, not to be too

anxious about any of the things of this life.—What trembling and complaining have we lately seen, what calling of vestries, and advertising, and bustling and subscribing, because one of the articles of our food has become dearer for a few months than it is in common, and how many a poor man is there who has gone into a vestry perhaps, to receive his loaf of bread at a reduced price, whom nothing could induce to enter into the church for many a month together. We read towards the end of this chapter, from which our story has been taken, that Jesus seeing many of the same persons to whom he had distributed the bread, again crowding after him. *He said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled.* Just thus in these days, many a poor man comes after the loaves in the vestry who cares little for the religious instruction which is offered him in the church.

Labor not, added our Savior for the meat that periseth, but for the meat that endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you.—I am the bread of life: he that cometh unto me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

Where is now that generation of men who received their bodily food thus miraculously from the benevolent hand of Christ? Where are the sick whom he healed, the lepers whom he cleansed, and the blind whom he restored to sight? Alas! Death has long since closed the eyes, and again stopped the ears which his miraculous power had once opened; and the grave has recovered its dominion over the dead, whom he, for a time, raised up; but though the bodies of these men have been mingled

with the dust, their souls live for ever; the benefit which they received in this world is over, but the other part of the blessing which our Savior offered follows them into eternity.—So it is in our case, as to all the various events of life: our earthly pleasures and our pains, and cares and anxieties, and joys and sorrows, our days of scarcity also, and of plenty, will soon be over, and be as if they had never been; but the spiritual good which is drawn from them will go with us into the world which is to come. Then they who have been most afflicted in this life, provided they have duly profited by their affliction, and have trodden in the steps of Christ, instead of being buffeted in this evil world, shall meet the eye of their approving God, for there *the wicked shall cease from troubling, and the weary shall be at rest; there they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat: they shall be led by the living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*



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